

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for selectively retrieving and displaying supplemental content related to a television program being displayed by an interactive television system, the method comprising:
 - 5 sensing a change in the television program being displayed by the interactive television system;
 - obtaining contextual information pertaining to the television program;
 - 10 sending an information request to a content source, the information request comprising the contextual information;
 - in response to the content source identifying supplemental content related to the television program being displayed based upon the contextual information, retrieving the supplemental content from the content source; and
 - 15 storing the retrieved supplemental content in the interactive television system for subsequent display thereby.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - in response to receiving a user command to find supplemental content related to the television program being displayed, displaying the stored supplemental content using the interactive television system.
- 20 3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - in response to receiving a user command to find supplemental content related to the television program being displayed:
 - displaying a list of stored supplemental content items retrieved from the content source;

receiving a user selection of a supplemental content item from the
list; and

displaying the selected supplemental content item using the
interactive television system.

5 4. The method of claim 2, wherein the user command is
received in response to a user activating a specifically-designated button on a
remote control device for the interactive television system.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein sensing comprises:
detecting a channel change.

10 6. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
repeating the sensing, retrieving, and storing steps at periodic
intervals while the television program is being displayed by the interactive
television system.

15 7. The method of claim 1, wherein the contextual information
comprises an indication of the television program being displayed.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein obtaining comprises:
reading the indication of the television program from vertical
blanking interval (VBI) data associated with the television program.

20 9. The method of claim 7, wherein obtaining comprises:
reading the indication of the television program from electronic
programming guide (EPG) data associated with the television program.

10. The method of claim 7, further comprising:

searching the content source for supplemental content related to the indication of the television program.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the contextual information comprises a time index.

5 12. The method of claim 11, wherein the time index indicates a time at which a user command is received to find supplemental content related to the television program.

13. The method of claim 11, further comprising:
searching the content source for supplemental content related to a
10 particular time segment of the television program based upon the time index.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein the contextual information comprises at least one keyword obtained from closed-captioning text associated with the television program.

15 15. The method of claim 14, further comprising:
searching the content source for supplemental content comprising
the at least one keyword.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising:
in response to supplemental content comprising the at least one
keyword not being found at the content source:

20 searching a global information network for supplemental
content comprising the at least one keyword; and

retrieving the supplemental content from the global
information network for storage in the interactive television system.

17. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
in response to supplemental content related to the television
program not being found at the content source:

5 searching a global information network for supplemental
content related to the television program based on the contextual
information; and
retrieving the supplemental content from the global
information network for storage in the interactive television system.

18. The method of claim 1, wherein the information request
10 comprises an identifier of the interactive television system.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the identifier comprises one
of a media access control (MAC) address and in Internet protocol (IP) address.

20. The method of claim 18, wherein retrieving comprises:
sending the identified supplemental content from the content source
15 to an interactive television system associated with the identifier.

21. The method of claim 1, wherein the contextual information
comprises an indication of a channel being displayed, the method further
comprising:
using the indication the channel to identify a content source to
20 receive the information request.

22. The method of claim 2, further comprising:
displaying the supplemental content simultaneously with the
television program.

23. The method of claim 22, further comprising:
reducing the size of the displayed television program relative to the
size of the displayed supplemental content.

24. The method of claim 1, wherein retrieving comprises:
5 filtering the supplemental content according to a set of user
preferences.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein the set of user preferences
is included with the information request.

26. The method of claim 24, wherein the information request
10 comprises an identifier of the interactive television system, and wherein the user
preferences are stored at the content source and accessed using the identifier of
the interactive television system.

27. The method of claim 24, wherein at least one user
preference indicates a type of supplemental content to exclude.

28. The method of claim 24, wherein at least one user
15 preference indicates a type of supplemental content preferred by the user.

29. The method of claim 24, wherein at least one user
preference indicates a source of supplemental content preferred by the user.

30. The method of claim 24, wherein at least one user
20 preference is stored in response to historical analysis of user selections of
supplemental content.

31. A system for selectively retrieving and displaying supplemental content related to a television program being displayed by an interactive television system, the system comprising:

- a set top box configured to sense a change in the television
- 5 program being displayed, obtain contextual information pertaining to the television program, send an information request comprising the contextual information to a content source, and retrieve supplemental content from the content source in response to the content source identifying the supplemental content as being related to the television program based upon the contextual
- 10 information; and
- a storage device integrated with the set top box configured to store the retrieved supplemental content.

32. The system of claim 31, further comprising:

- a display device configured to display the stored supplemental
- 15 content in response to receiving a user command to find supplemental content related to the television program being displayed.

- 33. The system of claim 31, wherein the set top box is further configured, in response to receiving a user command to find supplemental content related to the television program being displayed, to display on the
- 20 interactive television system a list of stored supplemental content items retrieved from the content source, receive a user selection of a supplemental content item from the list, and display the selected supplemental content item using the interactive television system.

34. The system of claim 32, further comprising:

a remote control device comprising a specifically-designated button
for sending the user command.

35. The system of claim 31 wherein the set top box is further
configured to sense a change of the television program being displayed by
5 detecting a channel change.

36. The system of claim 31, wherein the set top box is further
configured to send an information request to the content source at periodic
intervals and retrieve supplemental content from the content source related to the
television program being displayed.

10 37. The system of claim 31, wherein the contextual information
comprises an indication of the television program being displayed.

38. The system of claim 37, wherein the set top box is further
configured to read the indication of the television program from vertical blanking
interval (VBI) data associated with the television program.

15 39. The system of claim 37, wherein the set top box is further
configured to read the indication of the television program from electronic
programming guide (EPG) data associated with the television program.

40. The system of claim 37, further comprising:
a search engine configured to search the content source for
20 supplemental content related to the indication of the television program.

41. The system of claim 31, wherein the contextual information
comprises a time index.

42. The system of claim 41, wherein the time index indicates a time at which a user command is received to find supplemental content related to the television program.

43. The system of claim 41, further comprising:
5 a search engine configured to search the content source for supplemental content related to a particular time segment of the television program based upon the time index.

44. The system of claim 31, wherein the contextual information comprises at least one keyword obtained from closed-captioning text associated
10 with the television program.

45. The system of claim 44, further comprising:
a search engine configured to search the content source for supplemental content comprising the at least one keyword.

46. The system of claim 45, further comprising:
15 a search engine configured, in response to supplemental content comprising the at least one keyword not being found at the content source, to search a global information network for supplemental content comprising the at least one keyword; and

wherein the set top box is further configured to retrieve the
20 supplemental content from the global information network for storage in the interactive television system.

47. The system of claim 31, further comprising:

a search engine configured, in response to supplemental content related to the television program not being found at the content source, to search a global information network for supplemental content related to the television program based on the contextual information; and

5 wherein the set top box is further configured to retrieve the supplemental content from the global information network for storage in the interactive television system.

48. The system of claim 31, wherein the information request comprises an identifier of the interactive television system.

10 49. The system of claim 48, wherein the identifier comprises one of a media access control (MAC) address and in Internet protocol (IP) address.

50. The system of claim 48, wherein the content source sends the identified supplemental content to an interactive television system associated with the identifier.

15 51. The system of claim 31, wherein the contextual information comprises an indication of a channel being displayed, wherein the set top box is further configured to use the indication the channel to identify a content source to receive the information request.

52. The system of claim 32, wherein the set top box is further
20 configured to display the supplemental content simultaneously with the television program using the interactive television system.

53. The system of claim 52, wherein the set top box is further configured to reduce the size of the displayed television program relative to the size of the displayed supplemental content.

54. The system of claim 31, further comprising:
5 a filtering component configured to filter the supplemental content according to a set of user preferences.

55. The system of claim 54, wherein the set of user preferences is included with the information request.

56. The system of claim 54, wherein the information request
10 comprises an identifier of the interactive television system, and wherein the user preferences are stored at the content source and accessed using the identifier of the interactive television system.

57. The system of claim 54, wherein at least one user preference indicates a type of supplemental content to exclude.

15 58. The system of claim 54, wherein at least one user preference indicates a type of supplemental content preferred by the user.

59. The system of claim 54, wherein at least one user preference indicates a source of supplemental content preferred by the user.

60. The system of claim 54, wherein at least one user preference
20 is stored in response to historical analysis of user selections of supplemental content.